

Young Kairos Law works to help small businesses

Lam takes consultancy approach to law practice

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—Kevin Blocker

Spokane attorney Christal Lam says she decided to name her firm Kairos Law to incorporate the Greek word, which means “opportunity.”

Spokane attorney Christal Lam says she’s attempting to take her practice in a different direction than what tends to be the norm for private practitioners just starting out in the realm of business law.

Lam, a 28-year-old graduate of Gonzaga University’s School of Law, formed Kairos Law PLLC with the idea of representing small businesses, helping them to recognize and anticipate legal problems, and take action to protect themselves.

“I wanted to create a firm that was a more holistic place for business owners to come,” Lam says. “Don’t just come to an attorney when you have a problem. What can we do as a firm to help you avoid problems small business owner run into?”

Kairos Law, which does business as Spokane Business Attorneys, provides general counsel services, assists with contract and document review, and also helps with business planning and daily operations.

“We get involved on a monthly basis so we can teach our clients what we’re doing and why we’re doing it,” Lam says.

The firm’s fees vary per month for clients depending on the level of monthly services a business owner seeks, but the base monthly fee starts at \$1,000 per month and goes up from there, Lam says.

Lam says she opened the firm first as The Law Office of Christal S. Lam PLLC in January 2015 before pivoting and changing the name to Kairos just a few months after opening.

“Kairos is the word for opportunity in Greek, and that’s what we’re desiring to help foster for clients, more opportunities,” she says.

Lam says this past year, mostly word-of-mouth advertising alone helped put the firm on the map. Though she declines to reveal the firm’s annual income, Kairos saw a 123 percent jump in earned revenue in 2016 from 2015. This year, she says she expects to see a 20 percent growth over last year.

Kairos is located in a 1,250-square-foot office space on the sixth floor of the Paulsen Building at 421 W. Riverside, in downtown Spokane. Lam shares the office space there with attorney Randi Johnson, who owns Lilac City Law.

In addition to Lam, Kairos employs a contract attorney and contract paralegal, and a part-time office manager and part-time administrative assistant.

So far, in her interactions with clients, Lam says she’s noticed many small business owners fall for what she calls the entrepreneurial myth, a concept made popular by the E-Myth books written by Michael Gerber.

“The myth is that a good practitioner in a field can make a successful business on their own in that field,” she says. “A good baker will open a bakery. They can make more and keep more profit working for themselves, right?”

However, Lam says most small business owners usually find themselves doing too much in the way of performing daily tasks they have no experience doing.

“Most people have never had to hire or fire other people. They often don’t have any idea how and where to market. Do I build a website, should I use social media, and if so, which social media platform should I use,” Lam says.

Lam says Kairos’ goal is to help small business owners first understand why they’re in business, something some of her clients still can’t explain.

“It’s important to answer, ‘What do you want?’” she says. “Do you need a job, or, did you hate your last boss, are just some of the questions a business owner should be able to answer.”

After conducting those initial interviews with her clients, Lam says her next step is to help them reach their goals.

Lam says she currently has between 50 and 60 clients, and in recent months has been asked to speak at different legal events and presentations around Spokane.

“It’s been an encouraging time; I think the message has started catching on,” she says.

Lam grew up in Seattle after her family emigrated from Malaysia when she was 2 years old. She says her father was a longtime accountant for an H&R Block Enterprises Inc. branch in Seattle before opening his own business in 2007.

Even though her family was poor before moving to the U.S., Lam says they always maintained an entrepreneurial spirit, particularly her grandparents.

“It was a village lifestyle that was always looking to be resourceful in order to survive,” she says.

After graduating from high school, Lam completed her undergraduate degree from Biola University in Los Angeles, before enrolling at Gonzaga's law school.

"I've always liked the law," she says. "Lawyers have such a power, and responsibility, to protect people and uphold the law."

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